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STATEMENT BY

H. E. AMBASSADOR

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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF PORTUGAL

IN THE 4TH COMMITTEE

ON THE QUESTION OF EAST TIMOR

17TH OCTOBER, 1980

Mr. Chairman,

As this is the first time I take the floor in this Committee, I would like to begin by addressing to you, Mr. Chairman, and to all the other members of the Bureau, the sincere congratulations of the Portuguese Delegation on your election to those important functions.

I also avail myself of this opportunity to reiterate the pledge of my delegation to work closely with the Bureau and to give it our full cooperation towards a successful conclusion of the work of this Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

It is particularly significant that we are welcoming today in our midst, on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of

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Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the delegations of Zimbabwe and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Their presence amongst us bears witness to the record of the United Nations in the field of decolonization and constitutes a glimmer of hope to all those still struggling for liberty, dignity and self-respect.

To these two delegations we address a fraternal salute and wish them all the success in their endeavours.

Mr. Chairman,

In my statement today I wish to express the views of the Portuguese delegation on the question of East Timor.

One more year has passed and the question still remains in our agenda without any significant development towards its settlement.

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The position of my country on this issue is well known to everybody in this Committee. Between 1974 and 1975 Portugal spared no effort to carry out the decolonization of all the territories which had been under its administration, in full compliance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly namely those that establish the right of all peoples under colonial rule to self-determination.

We had hoped that the decolonization of East Timor would follow the same pattern. But this was not so, and the events that took place therein in 1975 forced us to bring this matter to the United Nations. Our attitude was not in any way motivated by selfish political or economic interests; our hope was that, through the United Nations system, and making use of the various mechanisms provided by it, it would be possible to reach a solution for the problem that will meet the wishes and the aspirations of the Timorese people and would, at the same

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time, be acceptable to the Community of Nations.

But five years have already elapsed and, in spite of the comprehensive analysis of the situation undertaken by the Committee based on the testimonies given to it we do not seem to have come any closer to finding a solution to the problem today, than five years ago. Even the humanitarian aspects continue to await a better opportunity. We cannot help but express our concern over the current impasse which only tends to aggravate an already serious situation.

Mr. Chairman,

Confronted with that impasse the Portuguese Government decided to take the initiative and set a new course for it to follow in the immediate future. This approach was defined in a communiqué issued by the Council of Ministers on the 12th of September, 1980 and circulated as an official document (A/C.4/35/8). With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I will read

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out a brief passage of that communiqué.

" Considering that the political problem of East Timor is of truly serious national concern to the Portuguese people, and bearing in mind that the policy to be adopted by Portugal regarding the political future of East Timor cannot fail to take into consideration both the views of the nationally representative movements of the Timorese people and the positions of the countries most directly concerned, the Portuguese Government will endeavour to hold vide consultations on this matter, both at home and abroad. These consultations shall be carried out:

- On the parliamentary level, where all political parties represented in the National Legislative Assembly will be asked to express their views;

- On the political level, taking into consideration the views expressed by all the nationally representative movements of the Timorese people;

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- At the diplomatic level, taking consultations with all the countries directly concerned with the solution of the problem of East Timor, namely Indonesia (with the understanding expressed in the previous paragraph), the United States, Australia, Japan, China, the Netherlands, the newly independent Portuguese-speaking countries, and the members of the European Economic Community".

It is our hope that the combined efforts of all these endeavours will contribute towards creating the necessary conditions for reaching a lasting settlement. This, however, will only be possible if the legitimate interests of all the parties concerned are taken into consideration.

Mr. Chairman,

There is yet another aspect of the problem with which all the delegations here present are by now certainly familiar, due to the extensive coverage given to it by the

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international press.

I will therefore not dwell in detail on the humanitaria needs of the population of that territory. Let it suffice to refer to the views expressed by the medical coordinator of relief efforts in East Timor of the International Committee of the Red Cross, upon completion of an assessment mission to the territory, and according to which the situation in East Timor was among the worst he had ever seen. (ICRC bulletin no. 49 dated February 6, 1980).

The International Committee of the Red Cross has tried to provide for some basic needs of the population but, according to its most recent report, the aid program started in 1979 has only been able to cover a limited number of Timorese in a few urban centers. A massive humanitarian effort needs to be undertaken throughout the territory, so as to improve the living conditions of the population in that territory. The Portuguese Government, on its part, will not spare any effort to associate

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itself with the rest of the international community to alleviate that situation.

Here again may I be allowed to quote from the communiqué of our Council of Ministers dated September 12, 1980.

"As for humanitarian aid to the Timorese living inside East Timor, Portugal will also in the future participate in the international relief programmes under way, namely through the supply of food, clothing and medicines. This contribution will be channelled through the United Nations, the International Red Cross and the several Catholic organizations, and administered, within Portugal, by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Defense, on behalf of the Portuguese Red Cross".

I thank you, Sir.